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SUBJECT: BOZIZE CALLS EXTRAORDINARY SESSION OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY TO CONSIDER AMNESTY

¶1. By decree signed on July 24, 2008, President Francois Bozize called an extraordinary session of the National Assembly scheduled to start on August 1, 2008. On the agenda:

Adoption of an amnesty law
Review of the 2008 financial law
Adoption of a new forestry code
Adoption of a law organizing the functioning of the High Council of Magistrature

This expected extraordinary National Assembly session agenda is intended to address current CARG priorities in the framework of the preparation of the Inclusive Political Dialogue, its responses to the recent increase in various goods and service prices as well as IMF requirements for some key sector reforms.

¶2. Amnesty law: One month after the signing of the Global Agreement in Libreville, Gabon among the CARG, the opposition political parties and the rebel groups, the adoption of the amnesty law is an essential step to enable the Inclusive Political Dialogue to take place.

¶3. Review of the 2008 financial law: This review became necessary after the CARG, in response to the increases in various goods and services prices adopted series of measures including the reduction of the VAT from 19% to 5% on essential products in last May. In the meantime the government also increased oil prices to reflect oil prices increase on the international markets. All these measures affected the level of the government budget resources.

¶4. New forestry code: The adoption of this new forestry code is an IMF requirement in the framework of the macro economic measures to be adopted for the CAR qualification for HIPC debt relief.

¶5. The law organizing the functioning of the High Council of Magistrature appears to be a significant step in the Central African Government attempt to reinforce its judicial system independence.

¶6. COMMENT: Also not specifically named, in addition to leaders of various rebel groups, former president Patasse and his Defense Minister, Jean-Jacques Demafouth, who is now spokesman for the APRD are expected to be granted amnesty so that they can participate in the dialogue. END COMMENT.

NEARY